

Discussion Notes on End-of-Career and End-of-Project Research Collections and Relative Merits of Journal Articles, In-house Publications, and “Grey” Literature

Compiled by Jeannine Scaramozzino

Port Aransas, Texas, Nov. 21, 2019

During the opening session of the 45th IAMS LIC meeting in Port Aransas, Texas, Jeff Paine of the Bureau of Economic Geology (geoscience research unit and geological survey of Texas) asked the more than 40 assembled marine science librarians to (1) suggest general steps that would facilitate archiving, retaining, and accessing materials at end-of-career and end-of-project stages (a major issue at many research institutions across the sciences), and (2) comment on the relative merit of peer-reviewed journal articles and in-house research entity publications. During the discussion, Catherine Rudowsky (Texas A&M Corpus Christi) committed the suggestions to paper. The suggestions, which have been revised and expanded from the original version, are listed below.

Topic 1: Archiving, Retaining, and Accessing Career and Project Research Materials

The question raised was one that is likely very common among research institutions in many science disciplines where relatively little effort has been expended to organize, document, and archive research collections composed of diverse paper, electronic, and other physical forms of data. What do librarians suggest that faculty and researchers do to facilitate the archiving process at the end of research projects and at major career transitions?

- Communicate with your librarian at the beginning of a project or career and continue communicating at key points during a project or a career transition.
- Begin the archiving process at the beginning of a project or career.
- Grants should include support for digitization and other archival activities. Funding is more likely if you tell sponsors you are going to share data outside your institution.
- There may be federal requirements to share data or have open access to data that could be used to justify funding.
- Propose project archives as a deliverable or product rather than just a research activity.
- Refer to or develop a university-wide policy on open data and records retention.
- Consider a limited terminal appointment (a few weeks to a few months) for researchers during which they would work with a librarian to help cull, organize, and document research materials.
- Divide the organizational work into manageable pieces and consider involving information science students in the organizational process.
- Train new faculty and researchers to include documenting, archiving, and data-sharing activities as part of the research culture.
- Organize and document material before it is digitized.

Topic 2: Relative Merits of Peer-reviewed Journal Articles, In-house Publications, and “Grey” Literature

Many research institutions are transitioning away from in-house publications and, toward peer-reviewed journal articles as the sole means of reporting scientific results, a transition that is largely driven by promotion and tenure demands for citation counts and h-indices. In-house publications, particularly those that are peer-reviewed, commonly represent more comprehensive studies over multiple years, focus attention on the institution as much as or more than the authors, and possibly have a broader audience and longer useful life than more specialized journal articles. From a science librarian’s perspective, what are the relative merits of journal articles, in-house publications, and “grey” literature?

- In-house publications and grey literature must be readily discoverable.
- In-house publications are important. Their importance differs from the primacy of journal articles and related citations for promotion and tenure of faculty and researchers.
- “Grey” literature is a gold mine.
-

[Librarians: Feel free to add more suggestions or comments on both topics. Thanks! Jeff]